

Office of Teacher and Principal Evaluation

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Based on feedback gathered from LEAs during 2103-2014, the Teacher and Principal Evaluation (TPE) Team identified the need to apply priority thinking to planning strategies and actions that would encourage efficiency through alignments, promote productivity through streamlining, and encourage principal effectiveness through a developmental pipeline. The Communication Bulletin will use the following icons throughout its text to remind us of how the work we are doing relates to these priorities.



Align



Streamline



Pipeline

In fall of 2012, a Teacher and Principal Action Team was created to direct, support, and monitor the implementation of Teacher and Principal Evaluation (TPE) in Maryland. By the end of the third year of Race To The Top (RTTT), June 2013, the 22 participating Local Education Agencies (LEAs) had established approved evaluation models, successfully completed a statewide field test, and responded to an information gathering exercise conducted by an independent third-party critical friend – the MACC@WestEd. A Year Three Stocktake (see [Communication Bulletin #17](#)) addressed seven initial decision points, which led to changes in the State Models, targeted local implementation grants, quality control processes, and the emergence of Student Learning Objectives (SLOs) as a premier component of student growth. During Year Four, concurrent to providing technical assistance with data collection and demonstrating examples of effective systems management, MSDE delivered a five part Professional Development Plan for Implementing and Sustaining Teacher and Principal Evaluation. A quality control process was repeated throughout the year to determine the confidence levels of LEAs, principals, and teachers to execute the work of TPE. In July 2014, LEAs successfully completed the two primary annual deliverables for Year Four: 1) an effectiveness rating for every eligible teacher and principal; and 2) the accompanying evaluation component data essential to conduct the analysis of TPE models. The following decision points were addressed in response to the collective findings from School Year (SY) 2013-2014. Actions resulting from the decision points are indicated in red text and subsequently reflected in each section of the Communication Bulletin.

Decision Point 8: Information gathered from 16,000+ educator surveys, interviews, and focus groups indicated that continued attention needed to be given to the application of SLOs as a student growth measure in evaluation. Particular effort needs to be directed to the quality and rigor of SLOs as they pertain to elevating student performance and differentiating educator effectiveness. Inherent in the information was the additional need for consistency in SLO definition, content, and protocol. While LEA quality control feedback during the year indicated increasing levels of confidence to execute the work of TPE, direct survey feedback from teachers and principals indicated less confidence and a need for greater intentionality of message and delivery of content at the local level. The issue of communications remained persistent and was evident in much of the feedback from both the quality control sessions and the spring information gathering. The ongoing interest in SLOs and communications will be further compounded by the issue of sustainability as TPE enters Year Five. **A strategic plan, which includes a quality control process and addresses the primary interests of Student Learning Objectives, communications, and sustainability must be developed, executed, and validated.**

Decision Point 9: By September of 2014, effectiveness ratings will have been submitted for every teacher and principal in Maryland (as defined by the Education Reform Act of 2010). These submissions will consist of nearly 500,000 data points associated with evaluation component measures. For the first time, the State will have the capacity to study the impact and relationships of various methods for determining effectiveness ratings. A thoughtful and deliberate process must be constructed to insure the integrity of the research while respecting the sensitivities of educators and the public. Careful professional investigations will need to occur to validate potentials and to determine the future role of State testing, whole school measures and shared attribution in evaluation. While the TPE Team has an interest in these discoveries, the scope and expertise of these studies exceeds the capabilities and the capacity of the TPE Team. The absolute integrity required of this research necessitates an agency response in partnership with external unbiased resources. This body of data represents the sum accounting of two years work by Maryland's TPE Team and the findings must accordingly be accurate, certain, and replicable. **A full analysis of 2013-2014 effectiveness ratings and component evaluation measures must be conducted.**

Decision Point 10: With the successful application of TPE models across the State and effectiveness ratings collected for all teachers and principals, consideration must be given to determining how TPE will integrate into the organizational structure of MSDE for the purpose of sustainability. As RTTT funds fade, TPE transitions must occur in both the way the work is funded and the way the work is executed. TPE must position itself operationally to maximize the emerging Google platforms and the agency's communication hub capabilities. Video-conferencing, webinars, and electronic forums must supplement or supplant existing operational paradigms. Budgets must be aligned to maintain TPE initiatives seamlessly and to insure that quality personnel serve in the appropriate positions. Most importantly, as the scope, size, and influence of TPE have grown, the relationship of TPE to divisional forces will need to be determined. **The integration of Teacher and Principal Evaluation with MSDE organizational and technology structures must be determined.**



WestEd/CTAC Annual Report: Real Progress in Maryland

As part of its approved TPE plan with the U.S. Department of Education (USDE) in January of 2013, MSDE agreed to utilize the services of a third party, the Mid- Atlantic Comprehensive Center at WestEd (MACC@WestEd), as both a critical friend and partner. The MACC@WestEd is recognized as an approved educational research and resource provider by USDE. In this role, MACC@WestEd is providing on-going unbiased feedback and programmatic assistance and serves as additional assurance to USDE that Maryland is meeting the commitments within their approved TPE plan. In spring 2014, MACC@WestEd and the Community Training and Assistance Center (CTAC) conducted an extensive information gathering exercise that included interviews of local superintendents, principals, and union leaders; focus group meetings with teachers; and direct surveys of teachers and principals. This information was used to construct an independent report of Maryland's TPE progress to date, called "Real Progress in Maryland."

Findings:

On many issues, the perceptions of Maryland's frontline educators were positive about the potential of TPE. As they gain more experience in implementing the new evaluation system, teachers and principals indicated that their confidence and skill levels were growing. They also raised concerns that needed to be addressed if the quality of implementation is to increase. While teachers of various degrees of teaching experience saw TPE differently, positive perceptions increase as LEAs apply thoughtful and purposeful practice to their TPE processes. While many educators believed there will be little immediate change resulting from the new effectiveness ratings, most saw continued supports at all levels, combined with a deepening of instructionally focused dialogue, as holding the greatest longer term promise. This promise was elevated where educators saw evaluation as a means of improving their teaching craft rather than as compliance to mandates.

While many educators found the implementation of SLOs in their school or district to be challenging, most expressed openness to using SLOs to advance student achievement and professional practice. This openness was most pronounced when there were ample supports, professional development, purposeful conversations between teachers and principals, data to construct the conversation, increased practice in writing SLOs, and alignment to teacher, school, and LEA interests.

In addition to what was seen as an unrealistic pace and inconsistent communications, LEAs reported struggling to make connections between SLOs, observations, and the new Maryland College and Career-Ready Standards (MCCRS). LEAs also reported stress with the technologies available and capable of managing TPE information. Teachers, particularly those with a high percentage of economically challenged students, said they needed more training on the components of TPE, using the MCCRS standards, and applying data in evaluation. A clear need was identified with the skills and leadership capacities of Principals. Principals and teachers alike cited the need for school leaders to have additional training in instructional leadership to address observations practices, evaluation consistencies, and time management.

Recommendations:

Being able to successfully manage the TPE system is a core requirement for every district in Maryland. In making decisions to advance TPE, implementation needs to be sensitive to important dimensions of educator practice. This means that districts must strike a thoughtful balance between manageability and having a thorough, rigorous process, and between standardization and customization. In making decisions on this front, districts would benefit from State-provided guidance on how much flexibility schools should be allowed to adapt and contextualize processes, while still having the comparability to maintain confidence and trust in the overall TPE system. This balance is essential when implementing SLOs. The SLO process should foster the planning and delivery of instruction through the use of data and systematic analysis. Further, it should motivate performance through the setting of growth targets by both teachers and students. Districts would markedly benefit by heeding a critical national lesson learned from fifteen years of SLO practice and research: the process of thinking through the inter-related components of the SLO and their implications for instruction is what matters most.

The following recommendations focus on what the state can directly support, and what district and school leaders need to do well, in order to have a high quality implementation of the TPE system in general and of the SLO process in particular. They focus on ways to improve the quality and consistency of implementation within and across districts in Maryland, while reinforcing the instructional emphasis of TPE. The recommendations build on the comprehensive support MSDE is currently providing to LEAs. They reinforce the Influencing Transformation strategy that guides MSDE's support to districts. These recommendations also should become part of the agenda of the alliance of eight organizations that have come together in Maryland to support the effective implementation of SLOs as part of the overall TPE system. MSDE has established a strong foundation for implementing TPE. The next phase of implementation improvements needs to come at district-to-school and school leader-to-teacher levels. While MSDE will continue to provide a range of supports to LEAs, ownership of continuous improvement of TPE needs to increase at the local level.

To that end, MACC@WestEd and CTAC suggested six key issue areas:

1. TPE Integration with Instruction
2. Principal Leadership
3. Quality and Consistency of SLO Implementation
4. Quality and Consistency of Observations
5. TPE Data Management and Technology Infrastructure
6. Constituency Building and Inter-District Learning

Evidence of Maryland's response to these areas can be observed in decision points 8-10 and the actions being taken in response to those decision points.

Summary:

MSDE is making significant strides in guiding and supporting the implementation of SLOs as well as TPE overall. The more experience frontline educators have with the new evaluation system, the higher their skill and comfort levels are with its implementation and the more their efforts focus on strengthening instruction. The dual challenge of improving the quality and consistency of implementation within and across districts is not unusual in a major new state undertaking. With the ongoing high quality support from the state, districts can directly address this challenge through thoughtful and coordinated action in six key issue areas. Maryland's landmark alliance of eight pivotal organizations further strengthens the foundation and prospects for continued progress in the year ahead.

A copy of the full report can be found at <http://msde.state.md.us/tpe/TPEReport2014.pdf>



RTTT Closeout & TPE No Cost Extension

In its original state, Maryland's 54 Race to the Top Projects were to have been completed by October of 2014. The No Cost Extension (NCE) offered by USDE allows projects to use remaining RTTT funds to continue the next chapter of their work for an additional year. TPE is one of 21 projects that are currently being afforded this extension. As MSDE determines the sustainability of TPE, the TPE Team is grateful for this opportunity to forward the next generation of this work and to provide professional development and technical supports for LEAs for SY 2014-2015. A significant portion of these funds are being provided in the form of sustainability grants to LEAs, as first described in June 2014. The remaining funds will be used to support the professional development initiatives referenced in Decision Point 8 and the Model Analysis referenced in Decision Point 9.



TPE Webinars

The TPE Team will conduct a "Housekeeping and Update" Webinar on Nov. 5 from 1-2 PM. Invitations and directions for calling in were extended to local TPE Points of Contact, Technical Assistance Contacts, and LEA Grant Managers. In addition to addressing LEA questions, the Webinar will deal with current matters of grant management, data collection and reporting, and calendar coordination.



TPE Grants (3)

To date, LEAs have been provided three grants in Years Four and Five to support local needs associated with TPE.

1. PY4 Implementation Grants – LEAs should have spent and claimed all funds that were issued as Implementation Grants. LEAs can still close these out, but only for expenditures that were encumbered not later than September 30, 2014.
2. PY5 Sustainability Grants – LEAs are still submitting plans to claim the Sustaining Grants, which were announced in June 2014. These grants are intended to focus on five areas of need: improving communication strategies and structures, deepening the SLO work, creating a virtual environment for meetings, aligning TPE models to PARCC and Maryland College and Career-ready Standards, and refining TPE models. If not previously done, please return a C-125 and the brief assurance narrative that was provided with the preliminary notification
3. PY4&5 Promising Principal Grants - LEAs should claim reimbursement for the Tablet/iPad Grants, issued pursuant to the Governor's Promising Principals Academy. Grants were issued in excess of the anticipated amount of the purchases. When completing the AFR for this grant, do not treat this as final. The intention remains to replenish these NOGAs when the second cohort of Promising Principals is identified in spring 2015.

LEA grant managers have been invited to participate in the November 5 Webinar to address questions about accessing remaining funds and positioning LEAs to closeout remaining grant activities by May 2015. To claim all grants, please provide invoices, proof of payment, and screen shots of the AFR system. For all TPE grant activities, contact Ben Feldman at ben.feldman@maryland.gov or at 410-767-0142.



Team Structure

The Office of Teacher and Principal Evaluation is pleased to announce the addition of three experienced professional to our team. Elizabeth Neal, who previously served in the Office of Educator effectiveness, will bring her professional development skills and networking experiences with the Institutes of Higher Education (IHEs) to our work. This focus is critical to the elements of sustainability that are linked to teacher and principal preparation programs. Her immediate priority will be to develop a strategy for penetrating college and university programs for the incorporation of content and practice related to SLOs, professional practice, and the evaluation process in Maryland. Tom DeHart, who previously worked in MSDE's Breakthrough Center, will bring his leadership development skills and school-based field experience with principals to the Principal Pipeline initiative. In addition to continuing his work with our Promising Principals Academy and principal coaches, he will begin to lay the ground work for the Aspiring Leaders segment of the Principal Pipeline. Finally, Ms. Teri Windley, who previously worked in the Division of Academic Reform and Innovation, will provide administrative assistance to the Office and serve as the initial point of contact for external inquiries. Her experience at MSDE and familiarity with organizational personnel and procedures will enhance our efficiencies as we expand our evaluation services.



Teacher and Principal Preparation

As we move ever closer to the end of RTTT, the importance of the role of our IHEs in embedding content and practices associated with high-quality evaluations into their preparation programs becomes critical to the sustainability of TPE. More than ever, MSDE will need to collaborate in a continuous fashion to ensure that timely and changing information surrounding teacher and principal evaluation in Maryland is communicated to and discussed with IHEs. MSDE will actively partner with Maryland's teacher and principal preparation programs to provide technical assistance and professional development to ensure the alignment of courses, assessments, and clinical experiences with teacher and principal evaluation components. This partnership will take on greater importance as other stakeholders and external agencies attempt to associate educator effectiveness with educator preparation. While advocating transparency, MSDE remains committed to working in collaboration with IHEs to advance teacher and principal preparation programs, while protecting the integrity of our personnel, programs, and institutions.

*Analysis of
2013-2014
Effectiveness
Ratings and
Component
Evaluation
Measures*



Effectiveness Ratings

As part of Maryland's RTTT grant application, the State promised to design and implement a new evaluation system for teachers and principals. The parameters for this new system were defined in COMAR 13A.07.09. During SY 2011-12, seven LEAs piloted evaluation models. During SY 2012-13, all 22 RTTT LEAs field tested evaluation models. In late spring 2013, all LEAs submitted local evaluation models, which were reviewed and accepted by MSDE. During SY 2013-14, all 22 RTTT LEAs executed their approved qualifying models. Using the data structures that were developed collaboratively, all 22 RTTT LEAs submitted teacher and principal evaluation data: for 43,805 teachers and 1,112 principals. The preliminary descriptive analysis has been completed and was presented to the Maryland State Board of Education on October 28, 2014. A copy of the report, the PowerPoint presentation, and statewide data can be found at: <http://marylandpublicschools.org/MSDE/programs/tpe/2014evaluation.html>.



Ratings Analysis

The analysis of the 2013-14 data will proceed in several waves. The first set of analyses will offer a description of the distribution of teacher and principal ratings. Data will be examined by grade span, LEA size, LEA geographic location, school high and low poverty indicators, school high and low minority indicators, and by school SPI performance tiers. Ratings will be compared showing the effect of restoring the state assessment for MSA teachers. The distribution of official ratings by LEA will be included.

The second step will be the analysis of the performance of the individual models, to be conducted by MACC@WestEd. This analysis will use more advanced statistical techniques to identify the value and contribution of individual components to the overall effectiveness of the models to discriminate among educators.

The third step in the analysis, already underway in many cases, will be for LEAs to parallel the work that MSDE is doing. LEAs will apply local expert judgment, will study the relative rankings of their staffs, will engage with their stakeholders to study the performance of cut scores, and will identify important refinements to their models going forward, especially as PARCC matures and becomes available as a repeated-measure performance outcome.

The fourth step in this analysis will be to meld the descriptive and inferential analyses conducted by MSDE and WestEd, respectively, with the LEA-specific research to bring forward a body of findings which may inform general recommendations.

The TPE Team will interact in close coordination with the Office of School Effectiveness and the Office of Teaching and Learning as the structure for this analysis is developed and executed.

A strategic plan, which includes a quality control process and addresses the primary interests of Student Learning Objectives, Communications, and Sustainability



Professional Development Spheres of Influence 6-8

Building upon Year Four's "Plan for Implementing and Sustaining Teacher and Principal Evaluation," Year Five will consist of three Spheres of Influence. These spheres will be pursued to facilitate the delivery of services within the greater contexts of aligning the work of TPE to increase common messaging and create greater efficiencies including streamlining the work of TPE to make it more doable for teachers, principals, and the supervisors of principals; and pipelining the TPE work to develop the skills of current and future principals. The Spheres will employ teams from each LEA who will construct local plans to ensure that common critical information finds its way to teachers, principals, and school communities. LEA teams will consist of supervisors of principals, principals, teachers, and professional development topical experts.

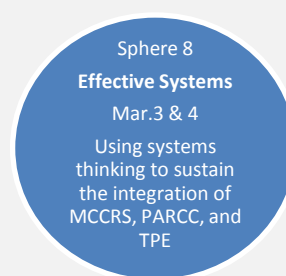
Sphere 6 will assist LEAs in the construction of high-quality and rigorous SLOs that are both attainable and differentiate educator performance. As a result of this strand, participants will gain an understanding of the supreme importance of instructional leadership and the SLO process – identifying methodologies for elevating principal, teacher, and student performance through aligned and rigorous SLOs, as evidenced in instructional planning and delivery.

Sphere 7 will focus on communications. As a result of this strand, participants will learn the importance of collaboration; and the maintenance of stakeholder knowledge and operational capacities to integrate and simultaneously support the work of MCCRS, TPE, and PARCC.

Sphere 8 is directed at sustainability, particularly the policies and systems thinking that must be in place to sustain the work of TPE beyond RTTT. The Sphere will address principal pipelines as a means to identify and nurture current and future school leaders, the integration of TPE with PARCC and the MCCRS, the use of grants and third party resources, and the partnering role of IHEs in preparing teachers and principals. As a result of this strand, participants will recognize the complexities of working within and across multiple systems and be able to respectfully employ existing systems to navigate varied audiences and secure desired, permissible, and sensible solutions.

Follow-up work in each Sphere will continue throughout the year and a quality control process will be conducted by an oversight team of representative signees of the June 2014 Memorandum of Understanding.

24 LEA Teams
48 Current Principals
48 Principal Supervisors
48 Teachers
48 Subject Experts



Reporting on Sphere 6: September and October SLO Convenings

The TPE Team hosted three Professional Development (PD) opportunities focusing on participants gaining deeper knowledge of SLOs and their relationship to instructional planning, delivery, and student growth. Each convening targeted specific stakeholder groups and were collaboratively planned with CTAC. CTAC's Bill Slotnik and Scott Reynolds, national experts in SLOs who have worked with a large number of school districts and states, served as lead presenters for the September convenings, while Scott co-presented with the TPE Team's PD experts, Joe Freed, Liz Neal, Frank Stetson, and Ilene Swirnow, for the October session.

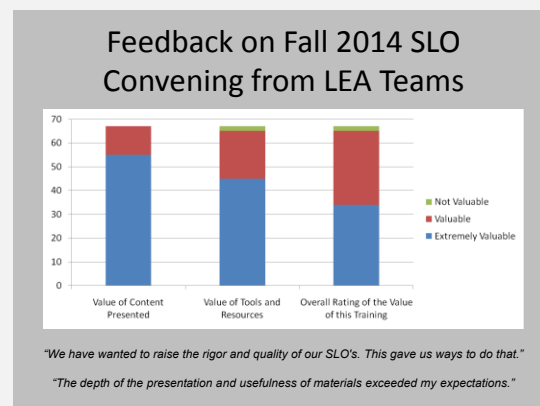
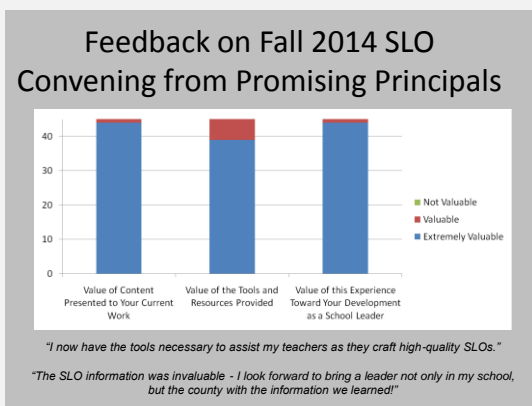
These experiences served to take the participants to a deeper level of understanding of the structure of SLOs and their instructional focus so as to maximize their potential usage at the district, school, and classroom levels. The elements addressed included the following:

- Why SLOs?
- Quality Elements of an SLO
- Setting Growth Targets
- Phases of the SLO process
- SLO Leadership Tools
- Key District Decisions
- Instructional Crosswalks
- Turning Reflections into Planning

The audiences for each of the sessions were targeted on the basis of their roles in supporting the development of appropriate, rigorous, and high quality teacher and principal SLOs that are aimed at important elements of student growth. The sessions focused on the following specific audiences:

- September 15 – MSDE instructional staff that provide supports to teachers and district instructional leaders. It is critically important for the MSDE staff to be able to have comprehensive knowledge of SLOs to support staff at the district level.
- September 16 & 17 – school district TPE implementation leadership teams consisting of two executive officers, two principals who represent elementary and secondary levels and are members of MSDE's principal advisory council, two teachers who were identified through MSEA, and a district level professional development leader. These roles represent the signatories to the MOU establishing cooperative agreement regarding SLOs among the State Board of Education, MSDE and State Superintendent Dr. Lowery, local superintendents, MSEA, the Baltimore Teachers Union, and the Maryland elementary and secondary principal associations.
- October 9 – updating the additional executive officers so that the provision of information to principals and teachers regarding SLOs would be maximized.

Collective Feedback from participants in the September SLO convenings is reflected in the following graphs:



These and subsequent PD sessions aimed to raise the level of understanding of the supreme importance of instructional leadership and, through the utilization of an aligned and rigorous SLO process, identify methodologies for elevating principal, teacher, and student performance. Additionally, they will serve to address the goal to provide comprehensive and consistent information across Maryland schools regarding the development, implementation, and application of SLOs.

Looking Ahead; Previews of Future Convenings

LEA Teams will reconvene, and Executive Officers will meet for topical professional development as follow:

- Sphere 7: December 9 & 10 – "Building and Executing Effective Communication Strategies" will focus on Communications and Stakeholder Capacity. The target audience will be the school district TPE implementation teams that attended the September 16 & 17 convenings.
- Executive Officers: January 14 – will address needs related to SLOs, identified in participant feedback on the October 9 Executive Officer convening. The target audience will be the Executive Officers.

- Sphere 8: March 3 & 4 – “Using Systems Thinking to Sustain the Integration of MCCRS, PARCC, and TPE” will focus on developing Effective Systems. The target audience will be the school district TPE implementation teams that attended the September 16 & 17 convenings.
- Executive Officers: June 2015 – Consideration is also being given to an end-of-year conveying of Executive Officers to collaborate on the sum impact of the RTTT TPE project and to determine ways to sustain work that is deemed to be of value beyond July 2015.

Additional information including times and locations will be provided in a timely manner for all participants



Quality Control

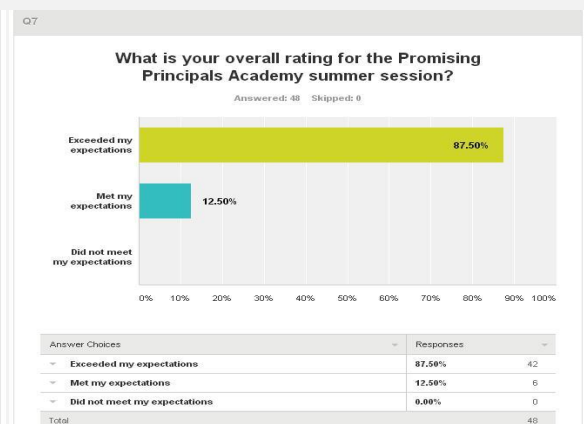
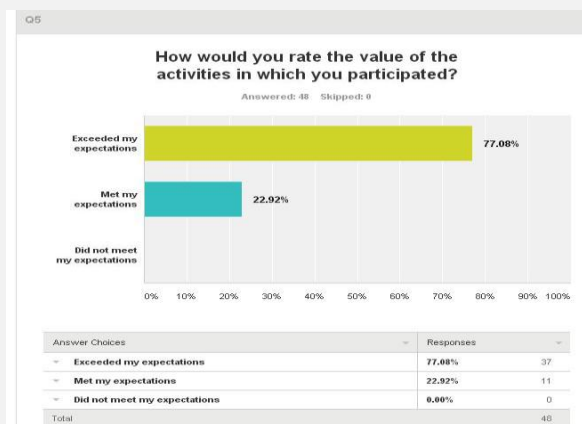
Like last year, we are developing a quality control process that will help us determine the degree to which information and professional development that is presented at convenings and meetings finds its way to user audiences. Last year’s annual report from WestEd clearly identified this communication gap as a major obstacle to teachers’ and principals’ understanding of expectations and advocacy for TPE. The Memorandum of Understanding presents an excellent vehicle for addressing this concern and for reaching out to user audiences to measure increases in capacities. Signees of the MOU are being invited to a meeting on November 24 to develop an instrument and a method for determining the degree to which SLO information presented in September is reaching the school and the classroom. This information will, in-turn, be used to frame our programmatic thinking for the winter and spring.



The Governor’s Promising Principal Academy – Summer Convening

Principals have been identified as the key to actualizing reform in education. In response to local superintendents’ interest in supports for the next generation of school leaders, MSDE conducted its first convening of the Governor’s Promising Principals Academy, July 28-30. The program included 48 participants from every LEA in the State, organized into eight cohort groups, and focused on the initial topics of ethics; leadership; and developing one’s personal and professional vision, mission, and goals. The cohorts groups grappled with the challenges of effective team building and problem solving, and forged communication networks that will build their working relationships with principal coaches, educational experts, and fellow participants throughout 2014-15.

Below are two charts that reflect post-convening survey responses to two critical questions: the value of the work and the value of the experience.



The following comments reflect some of the anecdotal responses from the participants and are representative of the vast majority received:

“The networking and relationships built over the 3 days were invaluable. My group had a wonderful time getting to know one another and will stay in touch as the year progresses. We were already using each other as resources with issues arising in our schools.”

“Taking the time to really hone in on my own vision, beliefs, and goals as an administrator with a group of people and experts was an invaluable experience. I am definitely approaching the start of my school year (at a new school) in a way I would never have had the ability to do without this Academy experience.”

“My passion for education was strengthened as I learned about the critical nature of core values. I will lead with the “why”. ”

“Everyone that we work with (academy participants, teachers in our school, family members, etc) brings their own experiences and personality to a task. It is important to embrace differences and work together toward a common goal.”

“I feel that I have truly changed and grown these past 3 days. I am more in touch with who I am and who I want to be as an administrator.”

“My biggest take-away is to become a leader that inspires others to follow because they want to, not because they have to.”

A full accounting of the survey results, feedback from participants, and the accomplishment of outcomes was compiled for reporting to USDE and MSDE in September 2014. In addition to participating in the Sphere 7 and 8 professional development convenings, the Promising Principals will engage in field experiences and coaching activities designed to intensify their practice, simulation, and application skills.